

CONFIDENTIAL

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LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

67TH MEETING

5.00 p.m., Wednesday 2nd July, 1975 in the Leader's  
Room at the House of Commons.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the 66th Meeting - attached.
2. Future Business.
3. Trade Policy - Import Controls - paper by  
Mr. Terence Higgins, LCC/75/78 attached.
4. The Civil Aviation Review - paper by  
Mr. Terence Higgins, LCC/75/79 attached.
5. Any other business.

Conservative Research Department,  
24 Old Queen Street, London, S.W.1.

CFP/SMW  
1.7.75

LEADER'S CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 68th Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 2nd July 1975, in the Leader's Room at the House of Commons.

Present: Mr. Whitelaw (In the Chair)

Sir Keith Joseph, Sir Geoffrey Howe,  
Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Maudling, Lord Hailsham,  
Lord Carrington, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Jenkin,  
Mr. St. John-Stevas, Mr. Heseltine,  
Mr. Maude, Mr. Raison, Mr. Buchanan-Smith,  
Mr. Edwards, Mr. Neave, Mr. Younger,  
Mr. Fowler, Mrs. Oppenheim, Lord Thorneycroft.

Mr. Atkins.

Mr. Hayhoe, Mr. Higgins, Mr. Patten,  
Mr. Ridley, Mr. Nicholson (In attendance).

Apologies: Mrs. Thatcher, Mr. Prior, Mr. Jopling.

1. Proposed Business of the Week

On Monday, 7th July there would be Private Members' Motions: Mr. Kilfadder on a United Kingdom Bill of Rights (Mr. Alison), Mr. Wellbeloved on One Parent Families (Mr. Fowler), and Mrs. Wise on Measures to Reduce Unemployment. This would be followed by Timetable Motions on the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines Bill and on the Employment Protection Bill, and by the remaining stages of the Statutory Corporations (Financial Provisions) Bill (Mr. Lamont, Mr. Fox).

On Tuesday, 8th July, Mr. W. Hamilton would seek to introduce his House of Commons Disqualification (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule, and this would be followed by a Supply Day with subjects to be decided. This would be followed by the remaining stages of the Child Benefit Bill (Mr. Fowler, Mr. Clarke).

On Wednesday, 9th July, Mr. Greville Janner would seek leave to introduce his Parliamentary Elections Act 1965 (Amendment) Bill under the 10 Minute Rule, and this would be followed by a Supply Day on the Royal Navy (Mr. Younger, Mr. Wall), on which there would be a 2 line whip. This would be followed by Motions on the Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Dried Vegetables) Order, (Flour and Flour Products) Order and (Cereal Breakfast Foods and Oat Products) Order (Mrs. Oppenheim).

On Thursday, 10th July, there would be a Supply Debate on a Motion to take note of the Third Report from the Expenditure Committee Session 1973-74 on Postgraduate Education and the Third Report of 1974 on Education Maintenance Allowances, together with any Special Reports (Mr. St. John-Stevas). This would be followed by a Debate on a Motion to take note of the Seventh Report from the Expenditure Committee, Session 1974, on Police Recruitment and Wastage, and the Related Special Report (Mr. Gilmour). This would be followed by a Motion on Alfred Herbert Ltd (Mr. Heseltine).

It was understood that the order for business on Wednesday and Thursday might be reversed.

/... On Friday,

On Friday, 11th July, there would be Private Members' Bills: the Lords' Amendments to Mr. Hemling's International Road Haulage Permits Bill, and on any other Bills received from the Lords; and the Second Reading of Mr. Ashley's Battered Wives (Rights to Possession of Matrimonial Home) Bill, and the Second Reading of other Private Members Bills.

Monday, 14th July, would be a Supply Day with subjects to be decided.

## 2. House of Commons Papers

Mr. Peyton reported that ever since the strike last summer had interrupted supplies of Parliamentary papers, Mr. Atkins and he had been pressing the Government to take precautions against a repetition which would render Parliament virtually unworkable. The Government were now setting up printing machinery within the Palace and while their Left wing were criticising this, he had assured Mr. Short that we would support it. This approach was agreed.

## 3. Timetable Motions on two Bills on Monday

Mr. Atkins pointed out that while the Conservatives had guillotined two Bills in one Motion in 1962, they had allowed a whole day for the debate then, whereas the Government were proposing to allow only three hours debate on Monday. Mr. Jenkin was content with existing progress on the Petroleum and Submarine Pipelines Bill. As a result of earlier delays the Government had had time to consider representations from the oil industry and were bringing forward a number of sensible amendments.

Mr. Hayhoe reported he had made an agreement in writing on a timetable for the Employment Protection Bill with the Minister of State, Mr. Booth, which would have got the Bill out of Committee by 22nd July. It now appeared that Mr. Booth had miscalculated his timing and wanted to change the agreement, to get the Bill out a week earlier. Mr. Booth had offered a few minor concessions on Opposition amendments in return for agreement on changing the timetable, but these were inadequate. The Conservative members of the Committee had enabled the Government to keep a quorum and the only occasion on which filibustering had been alleged was one for which Government supporters were clearly responsible. Mr. Costain, the Chairman of the Standing Committee, had said that of all Bills he had experienced in Committee, this least merited a guillotine in view of the progress made.

It was felt that if we let the Government have their way they would make a habit of such tactics. The most effective sanction we had was to table a Motion of Censure on the Leader of the House, and this, requiring a full day's debate, would make it difficult for the Government to complete their numerous Bills by the time the House rose. We could also refuse co-operation over a timetable for the Community Lead Bill. Some fears were expressed that the public might resent such political manoeuvring at a time of national crisis, but in moving a Motion of Censure we could emphasise that:

(a) the Employment Protection Bill was inflationary and imposed severe burdens on industry;

(b) the Government were gravely abusing Parliament by bringing forward numerous Bills late in the Session and detaining large numbers of members on Committees upstairs, denying them the opportunity to take part in important debates on the floor of the House;

(c) this huge programme of Government legislation was almost entirely irrelevant to the country's problems and, in many cases,

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extremely damaging.

It was agreed that Mr. Atkins would indicate, through the usual channels, that the Shadow Cabinet was likely to table a Motion of Censure on the Leader of the House if the Government persisted with their intention to guillotine the Employment Protection Bill. Faced with this threat, it was felt likely that the Government would give way.

Lord Carrington reported that the Leader of the House of Lords wanted us to assist in obtaining a speedy passage for the Industry Bill there, as it was needed to assist various ailing firms. It was agreed that we should try in return to exact concessions on our amendments.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith reported that the Government was trying to agree a timetable for the Scottish and Welsh Development Agency Bills which they wanted out of Committee by the end of the month. This would mean that they would be given only three weeks as against the eight weeks they would normally be given. This was further evidence of the disgraceful way the Government was treating Parliament.

4. Subjects for Supply Day

There was a discussion and various subjects were suggested. It was agreed that it was not the right time to debate two of these: urban problems and the railways. On the former, it was doubtful whether our approach was fully prepared, and, on the latter, we should wait for the Government to develop their views on cash ceilings for nationalised industries. It was agreed to debate the problems of the voluntary organisations, (this debate could possibly be extended to cover the whole Supply Day), but it was also agreed that it would be useful to devote half a day to debating the question of arms sales, on which Mr. Warren would open.

5. State Financing of Political Parties

Lord Thornycroft, referring to his reply to Lord Houghton, which had been agreed by a Committee consisting of Mr. Whitelaw, Mr. Maude, Lord Chelmer, and Sir Alastair Graesser (LCC/75/80), said that the draft suggested various questions which the Committee should seek to answer. The tactical approach on which it had been based was that we should let the Labour Party make the running in asking for public support: already it was known that they were pressing the Committee to make progress. Lord Hailsham suggested that the latter should also ask the Committee to attempt to answer the question of how it was possible to avoid favouring the older, established parties at the expense of new parties, if money was to be paid on the basis of past performance.

The draft was agreed, with this insertion, and it was also agreed that the text should be communicated to the Press.

6. Trade Policy - Import Controls - Paper by Mr. Higgins (LCC/75/78)

There was a short discussion after which the Paper was agreed.

7. Civil Aviation Review - Paper by Mr. Higgins (LCC/75/79)

Mr. Higgins, introducing his paper, said they did not know what measures Mr. Shore would propose. Mr. Buchanan-Smith said that if British Caledonian (B-Cal) were to collapse it would be very demoralising indeed for Scotland. The presence of B-Cal on Scottish air routes meant an improved standard of service to travellers. B-Cal did not, at present, need money and was not overmanned, but

the Conservatives had designated its routes and it would look to us for support. We should be cautious on what we said, as he would wish us to give help if it became necessary. Mr. Younger did not wish us to oppose the Government taking a 25 per cent stake; without it, faced by the hostility of the Government and British Airways, he feared for the future of B-Cal. There was a discussion. It was noted that the Trade and Aviation Committees were vigorously opposed to the 25 per cent stake as this would keep the issue in the political arena. On the one hand there was the precedent of our opposition to the Government line over British Leyland, but on the other, B-Cal was efficient and was competing with a very heavily subsidised nationalised airline. It was suggested that we should support the independent existence of B-Cal, that if the Government took a 25 per cent stake we should sell it off on return to power, and that some help might then be given to B-Cal by a more open policy on airline licensing and designation of routes.

Mr. Higgins' suggested approach was agreed for the present, but it was also agreed we should not close our options on aid for B-Cal if its existence were threatened.

The meeting closed at 6.25 p.m.